



General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/C.2/49/L.54
5 December 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
SECOND COMMITTEE
Agenda item 89 (d)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ELABORATION OF
AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN
THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR
DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA

Programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained
in document A/C.2/49/L.30

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with
rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

A. Request contained in the draft resolution

1. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 4, 5, 6 and 9 of the draft resolution the General Assembly would:

(a) Decide that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, should continue to function in order:

- (i) To prepare for the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, as specified in the Convention;
- (ii) To facilitate the implementation of the provisions of resolution 5/1 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on urgent action for Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix III), through the exchange of information and the review of progress made thereon;
- (iii) To initiate measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the global mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including its operational modalities;

- (iv) To elaborate the rules of procedure of the Conference of Parties;
- (v) To consider other relevant issues, including measures to ensure the implementation of the Convention and its regional annexes (operative para. 4);
- (b) Decide also, for that purpose, to hold, in addition to the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, to be held in New York for up to two weeks from 9 January 1995, a two-week session in Nairobi, from 7 to 18 August 1995, and, pending the entry into force of the Convention, to hold further necessary sessions in 1996 and 1997, the venue and timing of which should be recommended by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (operative para. 5);
- (c) Invite the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, in that regard, to adopt and implement expeditiously a plan of work for the period leading to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties and request the Secretary-General to make arrangements within the overall calendar of conferences for the Committee to hold the forthcoming sessions (operative para. 6);
- (d) Decide that the work of the Committee and the interim secretariat should continue to be funded through existing United Nations budgetary resources, without negatively affecting its programmed activities, and through voluntary contributions to the trust fund established, pursuant to its resolution 47/188, specifically for that purpose and administered by the head of the interim secretariat under the authority of the Secretary-General, with the possibility of using the fund, as appropriate, to support the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Committee and of carrying over resources contributed from one fiscal year to the other (operative para. 9).

B. Analysis of proposed activities and estimated requirements

2. The activities referred to above fall under programme 16 (Environment), subprogramme 3 (Environmental management of terrestrial ecosystems and their resources) of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as revised (A/47/6/Rev.1). Because of the timetable set out in General Assembly resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992, the above activities were not programmed for the year 1995 in the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.
3. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.30, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would be expected to hold two meetings in 1995 (operative para. 5). Both meetings would be provided with translation and interpretation services in all six official languages.
4. It should be noted that, in conformity with General Assembly resolutions 40/243 of 18 December 1985 and 47/202 of 22 December 1992, United Nations bodies shall meet at their respective headquarters. Bearing in mind that the established headquarters of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee is Geneva, holding the above sessions of the Committee in New York and Nairobi

would require an exception to the arrangements established by the General Assembly.

5. Should the General Assembly grant such an exception, the conference-servicing costs (at full cost) of the 1995 sessions of the Committee would amount to \$1,089,700, broken down as follows:

	<u>New York</u> \$	<u>Nairobi</u> \$
(i) Pre-session documentation (For each session: 100 pages, 10 documents in A,C,E,F,R,S)	104 500	103 300
(ii) Meeting servicing (For each session: interpretation in A,C,E,F,R,S)	247 900	271 900
(iii) In-session documentation (For each session: 150 pages, 10 documents in A,C,E,F,R,S)	152 800	151 900
(iv) Post-session documentation (For each session: 50 pages, 1 document in A,C,E,F,R,S)	<u>28 500</u>	<u>28 900</u>
Total	<u>533 700</u>	<u>556 000</u>

6. Under the terms of article 35 (Interim arrangements) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II), the functions relating to the servicing of the Convention would be carried on an interim basis by the secretariat established by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/188, until completion of the first session of the Conference of the Parties. Under the terms of operative paragraph 9 of draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.30, the interim secretariat would be funded through existing United Nations budgetary resources without negatively affecting its programmed activities, and through voluntary contributions.

7. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/477) concerning possible future work in relation to the Convention, during the year 1995 the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, in collaboration with relevant United Nations departments, programmes and specialized agencies, would continue to provide substantive support to the deliberations of the Committee, facilitate participation in its sessions by developing countries and assist, on request and subject to the availability of funds, affected countries in their preparatory work leading to the implementation of the Convention. Special emphasis would be placed on facilitating the implementation of Committee resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix III). Other tasks of the secretariat would include the coordination of its actions

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with those of other United Nations agencies and international organizations, including the secretariats of other conventions, and activities to promote ratification of the Convention and raise public awareness, as well as increased understanding of the contents of the Convention.

8. The current staff resources of the ad hoc secretariat would carry out the above functions during the interim period. This would require an extension of the existing posts (one D-2, one D-1, one P-5, one P-4, one P-3 and four General Service), for which funding has already been provided in the regular budget under section 8 (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), until the end of 1995.

9. The functions attached to the posts referred to above would be the following:

- (a) The D-2 post would be for the head of the interim secretariat;
- (b) The D-1 post would be for a deputy head, who would also be responsible for the organization and supervision of the substantive work;
- (c) The P-5 post would be for a senior economic officer, who would be responsible for organizing analyses related to the economic and social dimensions of combating desertification;
- (d) The P-4 post would be for a legal officer, who would assist in the analysis of and advice on legal aspects of the Convention and related instruments;
- (e) The P-3 post would be for an officer who would assist the head of the ad hoc secretariat and be responsible for documentation and conference planning. He would also help to organize and channel inputs from the numerous intergovernmental organizations active in the areas of drought and desertification.

10. It may be recalled that because of the timetable set out in General Assembly resolution 47/188, no resources have been approved under section 8 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 for the non-staff requirements relating to the activities to be implemented in 1995, including the secretariat servicing of the session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Nairobi. These requirements are estimated as follows (at initial 1994 rates):

	\$
Overtime	4 900
Consultants and experts	355 000
Travel of staff	152 000
Communications	37 400
Hospitality	2 000
Other general operating expenses	10 100
Supplies and materials	10 200
Furniture and equipment	<u>5 000</u>
Total	<u>576 600</u>

11. It should also be noted that during 1994 a substantial part of the activities under the programme in the context of the preparation of the Convention was financed from extrabudgetary resources, including a number of additional staff positions under bilateral arrangements with Member States and other donors. Special efforts would be deployed to mobilize extrabudgetary resources and to ensure that staff under bilateral arrangements would continue during the interim period. Such resources would supplement the regular budget funding of the activities outlined in paragraph 7 above and would facilitate the participation of the least developed countries and the developing countries affected by desertification and drought in the activities of the Committee during 1995. The related costs have been estimated to amount to \$2.5 million.

12. With respect to the possibility of using the trust fund, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/188, to support the participation of representatives of non-governmental organizations in the work of the Committee, as proposed in operative paragraph 9 of draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.30, it should be noted that the question of the policy governing travel and related entitlements for participants in United Nations meetings is on the agenda of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly at its present session. Any change in current policy would be subject to the recommendation of the Fifth Committee.

C. Proposals for accommodation of the additional 1994-1995 activities and estimated additional requirements

13. The following activities need to be programmed for the year 1995 under section 8 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 in order to respond adequately to provisions of draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.30:

(a) International cooperation. Promotion of the ratification process of the Convention, liaison with intergovernmental and non-governmental

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organizations, scientific and industrial communities and other interested parties and groups on the issue relating to the Convention;

(b) Parliamentary services. Parliamentary documentation: report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session on activities relating to the entry into force of the Convention and preparation of the first Conference of the Parties; technical documentation for the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its sixth and seventh sessions, including the documentation relating to implementation of Committee resolution 5/1; assistance for the Committee in the preparation of its reports to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session and to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its third session;

(c) Published material. Technical material: databases on non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations participating in the process of promoting the Convention; events related to combating desertification and mitigating drought; and reference materials related to combating desertification and mitigating drought;

(d) Information materials and services. Fifty press releases; and fact sheets, information kits and video material on the activities of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and on the ratification process of the Convention;

(e) Coordination, harmonization and liaison. Liaison with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the UNEP/WMO Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on issues relating to the Convention.

14. As estimated in paragraph 5 above, the requirements for conference-servicing costs amount to \$1,089,700. This amount is based on the theoretical assumption that no part of the conference-servicing requirements would be met from within the permanent conference-servicing capacity under section 25 of the approved programme budget, and that additional resources would be required for temporary assistance for meetings. The extent to which the Organization's permanent capacity needs to be supplemented by temporary assistance resources can be determined only in the light of the calendar of conferences for the biennium 1994-1995. However, it should be noted that the 1994-1995 level of resources for temporary assistance for meetings was estimated on the basis of previous experience to accommodate not only meetings known at the time of budget preparation but also meetings that would be authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings and conferences in the biennium 1994-1995 were consistent with the pattern of meetings in past years. On that basis, it is estimated that no additional resources would be required under section 25 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 for conference-servicing of the sessions of the Committee in 1995.

15. With regard to the requirements of \$576,600 for activities to be implemented in 1995 (see para. 10 above), the Secretary-General would intend to seek redeployments using funds initially appropriated under section 3 (Department of Political Affairs) for activities for the programme against

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apartheid. Therefore, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.2/49/L.30, no additional appropriation would be required for the biennium 1994-1995.

16. Requirements relating to the biennium 1996-1997 would be dealt with in the context of the proposed programme budget for that biennium.
